**Structure Class Words**

Structure-class words, sometimes called function words, are words that signal how the form-class words (sometimes referred to as “content words”) relate to each other in a sentence. There are far fewer structure-class words than form-class words; but there are no easy formal tests to identify them, and, since they themselves help determine function, functional tests are of limited value. In general, it is necessary to memorise lists of words that belong to the various parts of speech in the structure-class category. In some cases, structure-class words function in more than one capacity, and, in these cases functional tests can help you determine which part of speech the word is functioning as in the sentence.

**Determiners**

A **determiner** is a structure-class word that precedes and modifies a noun. Prototypical examples are:

- the definite article: *the*
- the indefinite article: *a/an*

Previous students have brought to my attention that many teachers teach that the articles are adjectives. You can see why from the above definition. But they are not the same. For one thing, they are structure class, whereas adjectives are form class. For another, they group with other determiners and share important differences from adjectives:

- determiners don’t occur with any adjective-forming derivational suffixes, such as *–able* or *–ly*.
- determiners don’t have comparative or superlative forms: *tall, taller, tallest; this, *thiser, *thisest.*
- determiners will not fit in both slots of the adjective test frame sentence: *The ___ man seems very ____.*
- determiners always precede any adjective or noun modifiers of a noun, as does *the in the expensive car stereo.*

There are six main groups of determiners:

| **Articles** | a/an, the |
| **Demonstratives** | this, these, that, those |
| **Possessives** | my, our, your, his, her, its, their |
| **Indefinites** | some, any no, every, other, another, many, more, most, enough, few, less, much, either, neither, several, all, both, each |
| **Cardinal numbers** | one, two, three, four,... |
| **Ordinal numbers** | first, second, third,....last |

**Articles**

The use of the **definite** or the **indefinite** article depends on whether or not the speaker (writer) refers to a specific entity also known to the hearer (reader). If both speaker and hearer understand a specific entity the definite article or a demonstrative like *this or that* will be used: *Please was*
the/this/that car. However, if the speaker has no particular car in mind, the indefinite article or other indefinite determiner will occur: Please was a/every car.

A thousand years ago English had no articles; instead, the word that was used for the definite meaning, and the word one was used for the indefinite meaning. This is actually quite important. Like the English of the past, many languages today lack articles, so people who do not speak English as their first language may have particular problems in using them. Some common problems:

Omission of the indefinite article: *I would like [a] large Coke.
Omission of the definite article: *Would you like [the] green or [the] red one?

A particular problem for many students is the fact that some determiners have the same forms as some pronouns (see below). Consider the following sentences:

1. Have you seen these new shoe styles? Have you seen these?
2. This house will be yours someday. This will all be yours someday.
3. Some people like it hot, and others like it cold. Some like it hot, and some like it cold.

The problem is that these words don’t change their form but do change their function. It is thus imperative to identify whether their function is that of a determiner or a pronoun.

Possessives can actually signal changes in function with changes in form:

My car is blue. So is mine. (substitute your/yours, her/hers, our/ours, their/their)

However, the words his and its do not change.

Auxiliaries
Auxiliaries were originally prototypical verbs which over the course of time have come to function like structure-class words. Because of their origins, they are often called auxiliary verbs. Auxiliaries are hard to define succinctly. By way of working definition, you can assume that they are used to signal that the main verb is coming in a verb phrase (a group of words that function like a verb), or VP for short. There are several types of auxiliaries. The modal auxiliaries can, could, will, would, shall, should, may, might, and must are almost never used as form-class words in English, as you can tell by the fact that they never change their forms. The verbs have, be, and do can be used both as normal verbs and as auxiliary verbs.

Here is a list of all the auxiliaries in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal Auxiliaries</th>
<th>Have</th>
<th>Be</th>
<th>Do</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>be</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could</td>
<td>has</td>
<td>am</td>
<td>does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would</td>
<td>having</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shall</td>
<td>having</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>doing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some things to remember:
- Any word not given in the table above is not an auxiliary.
- Just because the form is listed in the table above does not mean that the word is an auxiliary. Forms of have, be, and do are all frequently used as main verbs.

### Modal Auxiliaries

Modals have the following characteristics:

1. They signal meanings such as condition, probability, obligation, and possibility.
2. They always precede a main verb, as well as any other auxiliaries in the verb phrase:
   a. The fireworks display should begin in five minutes.
   b. That awful noise must have lasted for three hours.
   c. On 2 January, she will have been serving as chancellor for ten years.

Occasionally, the main verb may appear to be missing, as in *She wouldn’t like it, but I might*. The main verb can be omitted only where its meaning is understood; this process is called ellipsis (and the main verb is elided).

The words shall and will are often used to indicate futurity. Eighteenth-century prescriptivists, troubled by the existence of two words with the same meaning established rules for “proper” usage which dictated shall be used only after I and we, and you only after you, he, she, and it. Students are sometimes still taught this rule, but few people use it consistently.

Forms like could, would, should, and might were once the past tense forms of can, will, shall, and may (must is also a past tense form). However, in the process of becoming auxiliaries they have lost their present and past time meanings. Technically, will and shall are present tense forms, even though they have future time meaning.

### Auxiliary Have

Before we look at auxiliary have, we have to examine a new concept: verb aspect. Some people find verb aspect a troublesome concept and often confuse it with tense. **Tense** refers to time, present or past. **Aspect** refers to action, continuing or completed. Continuing aspect is referred to as **progressive**, and completed aspect as **perfect**. Progressive aspect is signalled by the present participle {-ing} form of the verb. Perfect aspect is signalled by the {-en} past participle form of the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progressive:</th>
<th>Perfect:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going home</td>
<td>I have gone home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When we refer to the “aspect” of the entire verb phrase, we refer to the tense of the auxiliary (or the future sense of will) plus the aspect of the main verb:
Present Perfect: I have gone home
Past Perfect: I had gone home
Future Perfect: I will have gone home

As an auxiliary, *have* always occurs before another verb in the past participle {-en} form. It is used to express the perfect aspect of the verb.

Warning: *have* can also function as a true verb: e.g. *Kelly has the dictionary*. Make sure that you learn to identify the difference. When functioning as a main verb, *have* will not be followed by another verb.

**Be**

As an auxiliary, *be* always occurs before another verb in the present participle {-ing} form. It is used to express the progressive aspect of the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present Perfect:</th>
<th>I am going home</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Perfect:</td>
<td>I was going home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Perfect:</td>
<td>I will be going home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The auxiliary *be* may also be followed by the past participle {-en}. In this case it signals the **passive voice** (which we’ll look at in depth later).

At each game, the national anthem is sung by the crowd.
This letter was written by the school principal.

Warning: *be* may function as a true verb: e.g. *The shop is open*. Make sure that you learn to identify the difference. When functioning as a main verb, *be* will not be followed by another verb.

**Do**

Auxiliary *do* has three main functions:

1. The formation of questions in some types of sentences: *Does he leave tomorrow?*
2. The formation of negatives in some types of sentences: *They don’t want that one.*
3. The formation of emphatic sentences: *I do like that one.*

We’ll study these functions in greater detail later in the course.

*Do* may also function as true verb. Its general meaning is something “to perform” or “to cause”: *I’ll do it, It’ll do you good*. As a main verb, *do* may also get its meaning vicariously from another verb, as in *We want it more than they do* (i.e. ‘want it’).
Qualifiers and Intensifiers

Qualifiers (and intensifiers) usually precede adjectives or adverbs, increasing or decreasing the quality signified by the words they modify (more colourful, less frequently). You can use a frame sentence to test whether a word is a qualifier:

The handsome man seems _____ handsome.

You can supply very, quite, rather, etc. Many qualifiers appear similar to adverbs; however, you will find that they do not pass many of the adverb tests.

Prepositions

Prepositions signal that a noun phrase called the object of the preposition follows. A noun phrase is any word or group of words for which a noun can be substituted (we will examine this structure in greater detail later). A preposition and its object are together called a prepositional phrase (PP). Prepositional phrases themselves function as modifiers of noun phrases or verb phrases in a sentence:

Adjectival function: The voice of the people (modifies the voice)
Adverbial function: hurried to the store (modifies hurried)
Adverbial function: sorry for the interruption (modifies sorry)

Prepositions convey relationships of time, place, and manner. Certain prepositions are phrasal: that is, two or more words that stand in for one (e.g. according to).

One difficulty many students have is that prepositions can have the same form as some adverbs. Compare I was playing inside the dorm to I was playing inside. In the first sentence inside is a preposition because it is followed by a noun phrase; therefore inside the dorm is a prepositional phrase. In the second sentence the word inside just modifies the verb; it has no object.

Prepositions also resemble something called a verb particle. In ancient English words were frequently formed by what looks to us like prepositions used as derivational prefixes. Only a few of these words remain today, but some examples are forget and overcome. More recently, many new words of this type have developed, except that now the verb particle is a separate word following the verb. Some examples are to look up (as in a dictionary) and to turn in (go to bed).

Why aren’t these considered prepositions? Compare the following two sentences:

Oscar looked up the word.
Oscar looked up the road.

In the first, the up is essential to the meaning ‘search in a dictionary’. Also, note that you can move the particle to the end of the sentence: Oscar looked the word up. The same is not true of the preposition: *Oscar looked the road up. It is important to be able to distinguish prepositions from particles.
Pronouns

Pronouns are not words that can stand in for nouns, as is frequently taught. Rather, they are substitutes for noun phrases. This is clear if you perform a simple substitution test on the sentence *That old torn hat is lying there*. You can’t replace the noun *hat* with *it*: *That old torn it is lying here*. You have to replace the entire noun phrase *that old torn hat* to get *It is lying here*.

Of course, the forms of pronouns don’t refer specifically to the noun phrase they are substituting for. We know what they refer to because the noun has been stated earlier or is understood. For instance, *You know that hammer we lost? It is lying there*. We know what *it* refers to because we have already heard it in the preceding sentence. The referent of a pronoun is called an antecedent.

A feature of pronouns is that they are peripheral cases of structure-class words. This can be seen from the fact that many types of pronouns can change their forms. One type in particular, the personal pronoun has a very complex system.

Personal Pronouns

A personal pronoun is the most basic type used to substitute for a noun phrase. The forms of personal pronouns are determined by three different characteristics: person (1st, 2nd, or 3rd), number (singular or plural) and gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter). We use these to describe the pronouns: *I* is the ‘1st person singular pronoun’, *they* is the ‘3rd person plural pronoun’, and *she* is the ‘3rd person singular feminine pronoun’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>you (thou)</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>he/she/it</td>
<td>they</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only the 3rd person singular has separate gender forms. The second person pronoun *thou* is now archaic (except in a few dialects), but since all educated people should be familiar with the writers of the past, it is important to know where it fits in the system.

Personal pronouns also change their form according to a fourth characteristic, case (subject or object), which is determined their function in the sentence. The forms given above are the subject case forms. The forms given below are the object case forms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>you (thee)</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>him/her/it</td>
<td>them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The subject (or nominative) case forms are used when the pronoun is the subject of the sentence. The following are the object (or accusative) case forms are used when the pronoun is the object of the verb or of a preposition. We have also ready seen the concept of the object of the preposition: *Give it to me*. We will look at the subjects and objects of verbs later on.
In the eighteenth century prescriptivists decided that in cases where the pronoun is linked to an antecedent by the verb be, the pronoun should be in the nominative. However, this prescriptive rule has never been entirely enforced. Better educated people will follow it, but even they frequently use the object form in informal speech.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is I</td>
<td>It’s me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That is she</td>
<td>That’s her.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is little social discrimination against using the object form in these circumstances, although individuals are still frequently “corrected” by family members or friends. However, other uses of the object case are much more likely to be stigmatised. For instance, many people use the object form of the pronoun after you and...:

**You and me** make a good team.

In the sentence above, both you and me are the subjects of make. Hence, educated Standard English prefers *You and I make a good team*, since I is the subject form of the pronoun. Many people are taught to correct this “error”, which can in turn lead to **hypercorrection**, where the speaker tries to correct a perceive error but ends up producing a new one because he or she does not understand the basis of the supposed error.

**Just between you and I**, Fred really shouldn’t wear those trousers.

Here the speaker has “corrected” you and me to you and I, except that in this case you and me is the object of the preposition; therefore me must be in the object case in Standard English. The hypercorrection between you and I is now used by Standard English speakers more and more frequently; however, if you are concerned to produce standard edited English writing, it is probably still best to avoid it in order to avoid the still present social stigmatisation.

**Reflexive Pronouns**

The forms of the reflexive pronouns are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st person</th>
<th>2nd person</th>
<th>3rd person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Plural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myself</td>
<td>ourselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yourself (thyself)</td>
<td>yourselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>himself, herself, it</td>
<td>themselves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You’ll notice that in Standard English most of the forms consist of –self or –selves added to the possessive determiner. The exceptions are himself and themselves, where the suffix is added to the object case form of the personal pronoun. Nonstandard dialects very frequently regularise the system by using forms like hisself and theirselves, on analogy with the other forms.

When the subject and the object of a verb are the same, the object becomes a reflexive pronoun. For instance, compare the following sentences:
Phil criticised him. (*him* indicates someone other than Phil)  
Phil criticised himself (*himself* indicates Phil)

Reflexive pronouns can also be used to add emphasis to their antecedents: e.g. *Senator Gillis himself showed up at our party.*

It is important to distinguish the usage of reflexive pronouns from that of the **reciprocal pronouns** *each other* and *one another*.

> They thought to *themselves* how nice it would be to get away. (reflexive)  
> The two lawyers whispered quietly to *each other*. (reciprocal, two people)  
> The members of the panel whispered quietly to *one another*. (reciprocal, groups)

The usage of the reciprocal pronouns for two or groups of more than two people is a general tendency. Reflexive pronouns are used for one-way actions and reciprocal pronouns for two-way actions.

**Indefinite Pronouns**

Indefinite pronouns generally have no specific referent and therefore no antecedent. The most common are *one, some, any, no, every,* and *other*.

*Nobody* came to our party.

Many indefinite pronouns can undergo functional shift to function as nouns.

> That book is the *one* that I ordered.

Sometimes the personal pronouns can have indefinite meaning:

> They say an honest man will never get rich.  
> You never know what the future will bring.

Although this is common in speech, it is often avoided in careful writing because of the vagueness of the referent.

There is also difficulty in determining “proper” usage when an indefinite pronoun functions as the antecedent for a personal pronoun.

> Each of them knew that ____ ready.  
> Everyone forgot about ____ promise to remain silent.

Should the blank in the first sentence be filled with *he was, she was,* or *they were*? Should the blank in the second sentence be filled with *his, her,* or *their*? You can select *he* or *she* if you know that the group consists entirely of males or females, but this is not always the case. Historically, *he* and *his* could refer an individual in a group if the gender was not indicated.
However, many people today believe that it implies that all members of the group are male. Clearly this is why many people substitute they or their. Other solutions are he/she and he or she. However, many people find these inelegant or excessively politically correct. There is no single right solution to this problem. Your decision concerning which forms to use will depend on your own political views, how prescriptive your attitude towards language is, your awareness of the history of the language, and similar factors.

**Conjunctions**

**Conjunctions** are structure-class words that join together grammatical structures. The most common are the **coordinating (or coordinate) conjunctions** and, but, or, yet, nor, for, and so. It is important to realise that coordinating conjunctions join grammatical structures of similar form. Consider the following sentences. Why are two of them ungrammatical.

- I drive a Toyota and a Ford.  
- I drive to work and to school.  
- I drive carefully and slowly.  
- I drive to work and school.  
- *I drive a Toyota and to school.  
- *I drive carefully and to school.

When two sentences are joined by coordinating conjunctions, the result is a **compound sentence**.

Pedro threw a temper tantrum, but his sister ignored him.

The same rules apply for **correlative conjunctions**: coordinating conjunctions paired with other words that extend the meaning of the first (both this... and that..., either this... or that..., neither this... nor that..., not only this... but also that...).

Students often have difficulty punctuating coordinating conjunctions, so it is worth digressing to look at standard edited usage.

1. Commas are always placed before the coordinating conjunction, though they are often omitted if the sentence is short (e.g. she sang and he hummed).
2. If the two units joined do not make two full sentences, there is no comma (e.g. peanut butter and jelly).
3. If three or more words are joined, the result is a list (or series), and commas follow each item in the list except the last (e.g. We gobbled peanuts, popcorn, and potato chips at the circus.)

Rule 3 is flexible. Many editors leave the comma out before the coordinating conjunction. Most grammar books, however, point out that keeping the comma can prevent ambiguities:

After the storm, the downtown streets were littered with branches, mismatched old boots, soaked newspapers, abandoned cars, broken glass from windows and fallen neon signs.

Is the street littered with broken window glass and fallen signs or glass from broken windows and fallen signs? The comma clarifies the meaning.
Conjunctive Adverbs

**Conjunctive adverbs** are coordinating conjunctions used only to signal relationships between two sentences. They are like adverbs in that they express the kinds of meaning normally carried by adverbs: e.g. contrast, addition, cause and effect, example or restatement, and time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>however, instead, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the other hand, still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition</td>
<td>also, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and Effect</td>
<td>accordingly, as a result, consequently, hence, so therefore, thus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example or Restatement</td>
<td>for example, that is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>afterward(s), earlier, finally, in the meantime, later, meanwhile, then</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that sentences with coordinating conjunctions must be punctuated as single compound sentences. Sentences with conjunctive adverbs are generally punctuated as separate sentences.

Pedro threw a temper tantrum, but his sister ignored him.
Pedro threw a temper tantrum. However, his sister ignored him.

If you want to join two sentences together with a conjunctive adverb, you have to use a semicolon, not a comma.

Pedro threw a temper tantrum; however, his sister ignored him.

A comma is nearly always placed after the conjunctive adjective by careful writers. However, it is standard edited practice to omit the comma for some conjunctive adverbs if they are used at the end of the sentence.

We are going to the movies. Afterwards, we will have dinner.
We are going to the movies. We will have dinner afterwards.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A **clause** is a grammatical structure that requires a subject noun phrase and a verb. We will study this structure in greater detail later. **Complex sentences** are sentences in which structure class words join an **independent clause** with a **dependent clause** (the clause introduced by the structure-class word). One type of dependent clause is a subordinate clause, which is introduced by a **subordinating conjunction**. The dependent clause is introduced by the subordinating conjunction.

Subordinating conjunctions relate the two clauses by means of adverb-like meanings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>after, as, as soon as, before, once, since, until, when, while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>as, as if, as though, like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contrast, Opposition</td>
<td>although, though, whereas, while, except (that)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and Effect</td>
<td>because, in that, now that, since, so that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Subordinate clauses at the beginnings of sentences are always followed by a comma.

Because he had forgotten his wallet, he couldn’t pay for the meal.
Although he had forgotten his wallet, he could pay for the meal.

However, subordinate clauses at the ends of sentences frequently do not need a comma.

He couldn’t pay for the meal because he had forgotten his wallet.
He could pay for the meal, although he had forgotten his wallet.

Generally the comma is retained for subordinating conjunctions of contrast keep the comma.

Note the differences between subordinating conjunctions and prepositions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conjunction</th>
<th>Preposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He insulted me before he left the room (= before + subordinate clause)</td>
<td>He insulted me before dinner (= before + NP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comma Splices and Run-On Sentences**

Something about the conventional rules for punctuation in standard edited English should now become apparent. The rules were formulated to be sensitive to clause structure. For instance, say you have two independent clauses.

He is always boasting. No one seems to mind.

We punctuate these with a full stop (period) to signify that they are independent clauses. If for some reason we want to join them in one sentence with a coordinating conjunction *but*, we indicate that we still have two independent clauses with a comma.

He is always boasting, but no one seems to mind.

We can also elide the conjunction, but we then have to replace the comma with a semicolon: a signal that the conjunction is missing.

He is always boasting; no one seems to mind.

Students frequently get this wrong, either because they do not understand the purpose of the semicolon or because they have failed to detect two independent clauses. They may produce something like:

He is always boasting, no one seems to mind.
This is called a **comma splice**: when two independent clauses are joined solely by a comma. If you read it aloud, it sounds no different from the sentence with the semicolon. Hence it is clearly not ungrammatical in a linguistic sense. However, it violates the accepted punctuation rules. But notice how important it is to be able to detect two independent clauses in order learn the rules.

Students also frequently omit the comma altogether:

> He is always boasting no one seems to mind.

This is called a **run-on sentence**: two independent clauses with no punctuation between them. There are four ways to correct a run-on sentence:

1. Add a full stop or semicolon. (*He is always boasting; no one seems to mind.* or  
   *...boasting. No one seems...*)
2. Add a coordinating conjunction. (*He is always boasting, but no one seems to mind.*)
3. Add a conjunctive adverb. (*He is always boasting; however, no one seems to mind.* or  
   *...boasting. However, no one seems...*)
4. Add a subordinating conjunction. (*Although he is always boasting, no one seems to mind.*)

The inability to follow these punctuation conventions is a source of great social stigmatisation in the United States. Teachers are expected to teach their students to employ these conventions consistently.

**Relative Pronouns**

We now have to look at a number of pronouns which we didn’t discuss earlier: *who, whom, whose, which, and that*. These are called **relative pronouns** because they relate a dependent clause to an independent clause. It is interesting to compare them to subordinate conjunctions to see how they were.

> Although he is always boasting, no one seems to mind.

In the above sentence, *although* modifies *seems*, the verb of the main clause. Since it modifies a verb, it functions adverbially. Compare that to the following sentence with a relative pronoun.

> The woman who married Rusty is an aerospace engineer.

Here the word *who* modifies a noun phrase, *the woman*. In fact, *the woman* is the **antecedent** of the relative pronoun. Since *who* modifies a noun phrase, it is functioning adjectivally. Adjectival clauses which use relative pronouns are called **relative clauses**.

Let’s take the above relative clause and tweak it.

> The woman whom Rusty married is an aerospace engineer.
Why the change to whom? It is because the relative pronoun is functioning as the object of married, rather than the subject, as in the first sentence. Later in the course, we’ll be looking at this frequently misunderstood usage in greater detail.

The form whose is a relative pronoun that functions as a possessive determiner within the relative clause.

The bicyclist whose helmet fell off kept writing.

The pronouns who, whom, and whose are all used for human antecedents, and sometimes for animals. For nonhuman antecedents, a single form that is used.

The trip that intrigues me most visits the Copper Canyon in Mexico.

The form that is also frequently used for human antecedents. However, the who forms tend to be preferred by more educated speakers and in standard edited English.

The pronoun which has antecedents that are things, animals, and sometimes a general idea expressed by the rest of the sentence. It is never used for humans.

Those apple trees, which belong to our neighbour, bear beautiful fruit. Carlo read all of War and Peace in one day, which astounded us.

In the second sentence, the entire main clause is the antecedent of which.

Sometimes whose is used as the possessive of that and which:

He tossed aside the lock whose key was missing.

However, prepositional phrases are also frequently used: the lock to/for which the key was missing.

Relative Adverbs

The relative adverbs where, when, and why function the same way as relative pronouns. They are called adverbs because within the dependent clause they modify verb phrases.

We visited the place where the Vikings landed. Our grandparents lived at a time when the environment was less polluted. Please explain (the reason) why you can’t turn in the assignment.

You can test this easily. Try deleting the relative adverb and adding the adverbial phrases there, then, or for some reason to what is left (e.g. the Vikings landed there).

Many relative pronouns and relative adverbs also have other functions in English grammar. If you cannot find an antecedent to one of these words, chances are that it is serving another function. An example is the interrogative function discussed below.
**Interrogatives**

**Interrogative pronouns** and **interrogative adverbs** are often called **question words** or **wh-words** because they frequently occur in questions and almost exclusively begin with *wh*-: *who, whom, whose, which, what, where, why, when,* and *how.* However, they may also be used to introduce dependent clauses in non-questions:

- I wonder who left the envelope on my desk.
- Tony asked them which cheesecake they liked best.

As noted above, interrogative pronouns and adverbs have no antecedent.

**A note on terminology:** The terms **subordinate clause** and **dependent clause** are often used rather loosely. In the discussion above subordinate and relative clauses are both considered types of dependent clauses. Subordinate clauses are dependent clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions, relative clauses are dependent clauses introduced by relative pronouns or relative adverbs, and interrogative clauses are dependent clauses introduced by interrogative pronouns or interrogative adverbs. However, some textbooks use the term “subordinate clause” for all dependent clauses. If you come across these terms, just make sure you are clear on whether the term **subordinate** is exactly equivalent to **dependent** or whether it means only adverbial clauses.